



**JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER
AND FORT POLK
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
*News Release***

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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***Fort Polk to hold public meetings
regarding disposition of trespass horses***

Fort Polk, LA – Two public meetings are scheduled in April to receive input from the public, agencies, and subject matter experts on the disposition of the trespass horses at Fort Polk.

Fort Polk is conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine the potential environmental and socioeconomic effects of a series of proposed actions to support the capture, testing for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), and eventual disposition of trespass horses from the Fort Polk Military Reservation and the Peason Ridge Military Training Area. The EA will analyze issues of concern and reasonable alternative courses of action identified by the public, animal welfare groups, appropriate agencies, and other subject matter experts.

The EA was mandated by a federal legal settlement which also stipulated that the horses are trespass animals and are not subject to regulation under the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

“We feel the Environmental Assessment is a win-win situation,” said Brig. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya, commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. “It provides an opportunity to make an appropriate decision on the disposition of these horses based on the input from a wide variety of interested citizens, animal welfare groups and subject matter experts. It’s an excellent opportunity for the public to participate in the decision-making process.”

“We also remain committed to humane and responsible treatment of the horses,” he said.

Public meetings will be held in Leesville, LA and Baton Rouge, LA to receive public input on issues of concern and alternative courses of action. The Leesville meeting will be held from 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, April 13 in the Landmark Hotel, 3080 Colony Blvd. The Baton Rouge meeting will be held from 3-6 p.m. Thursday, April 15 in the AmeriSuites Hotel, 6080 Bluebonnet Blvd. These meetings will be conducted in an “open house” type forum at which information booths will be established and public comment forms made available. The public can come and go at their convenience during the three-hour timeframe of the meetings.

(MORE)

Trespass Horse Public Meetings / 2-2-2

The State of Louisiana's, Department of Agriculture and Forestry has indicated some of these trespass horses may be infected with Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), a disease that can be transmitted to privately-owned horses in the area. The department has requested that Fort Polk test the horses roaming on land it uses for military training. All affected animals must be euthanized.

Additionally, these horses are at continuous risk of injury or death because of ongoing military training activities to include live fire exercises in the Fort Polk training area. They are endangered by training devices such as concertina wire, excavations, live firing of ammunition, and military vehicles. The horses often wander onto airstrips and drop zones posing a potential danger to airborne personnel and aircraft.

It also appears that the trespass horses have negative environmental consequences on Army-owned lands used for military training activities. The Army has found that the horses can be detrimental to ongoing environmental management activities, such as attempts to control erosion through reestablishment of vegetation.

The EA will evaluate potential impacts associated with a wide range of alternatives in regard to the disposition of the trespass horses. The analysis process will identify affected resources, evaluate effects of the proposed actions on those resources, determine alternative implementation methods, and, if necessary, recommend mitigation measures.

Throughout the analysis and decision-making process, a high priority will be given to the safe, responsible, and humane treatment of the horses.

No decision on any actions regarding the horses or the disposition of the horses will be made until after completion of the EA and careful consideration of issues of concern and reasonable alternative actions identified by the public, appropriate government agencies, and subject matter experts.

The Army encourages public input on this issue as well as the participation of animal welfare groups and other subject matter experts in developing an appropriate course of action in regard to this issue. To aid the Army in identifying and evaluating issues and concerns, comments should be as specific as possible. Please submit comments to the address shown below no later than May 15 so that your comments and ideas can be addressed in the EA.

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Or by email to horses@polk.army.mil

Additional information is available at <http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/horses/index.htm>